

Filing An Informal Complaint

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) uses informal complaints to help consumers resolve problems with the telecommunications services that the FCC regulates. You should always first try to resolve any problem directly with the company causing the problem or sending you a bill for a service. If you can't resolve the problem directly, you can file an informal complaint on many issues. Here's a description of many of the FCC's consumer protection requirements (and what you can file complaints about), and some information about the informal complaint process.

What Can I Complain to the FCC About?

The FCC regulates telecommunications services between states and internationally, and imposes numerous consumer protection requirements on telecommunications services providers. These requirements include rules to prevent telephone companies from switching your preferred telephone company for toll calls without your permission (slamming); placing unauthorized, deceptive, or misleading charges on your telephone bill (cramming); and disclosing your calling records without your permission. FCC rules prohibit or limit unwanted calls from telemarketers, unsolicited fax advertisements, and unsolicited commercial messages sent to wireless devices. If you change service providers, your old provider must "port" your telephone number to your new provider according to a schedule set by the FCC. FCC rules also mandate that equipment manufacturers and telecommunications service providers make their products and services, including 911 emergency services, accessible to consumers with speech or hearing impairments.

The FCC also imposes rules on radio and television broadcasters that prohibit airing material considered obscene, and limit airing of material considered indecent or profane to the hours of 10:00 pm to 6:00 am.

The FCC requires licensed broadcasters to disclose whether they have received or been promised payment (payola) for airing any material and identify who paid or promised to pay for it.

You can find out more about these requirements by reading Consumer Fact Sheets such as this one on each of these topics. For a list of the Consumer Fact Sheets on our Web site, go to www.fcc.gov/cgb/information_directory.html.

The informal complaint process requires no complicated legal procedures, has no filing charge, and does not require the complaining party to appear before the FCC.

What Can't I Complain to the FCC About?

If you have a problem with your local telephone service, including directory assistance, or telephone service within your state, and you can't resolve it directly with the company, contact your state public service commission. Contact information for your state public service commission can be found at www.naruc.org or in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory. For problems with rates for basic cable television service or cable television service quality that you can't resolve directly with the company, contact your Local Franchising Authority. Contact information for your Local Franchising Authority also can be found in your local telephone directory. Your state or local Better Business Bureau or consumer

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protection agency or your state Attorney General's Office may also be able to help. Again, check for listings in your local telephone directory.

Filing an Informal Complaint About Your Telephone Service

We've tried to make it easy for you to file an informal complaint, and for telephone companies to act promptly to address issues or problems. Once you file your complaint using one of the methods described below, if appropriate, the FCC will send it to the telephone company or companies named in your complaint. Telephone companies have 45 days from receipt of your complaint to respond to you and provide a copy of the response to the FCC. The FCC reviews all responses to be certain they address the consumer's concerns, but does not issue a ruling or decision on the matter.

You may file your complaint electronically using the FCC Form 475 (general complaint form) found on the FCC Web site at <http://svartifoss2.fcc.gov/cib/fcc475.cfm>. You may also file your complaint by:

E-Mail: fccinfo@fcc.gov.

Phone: Toll Free: 1-888-CALL-FCC
(1-888-225-5322) voice;
1-888-TELL-FCC
(1-888-835-5322) TTY
Consumer Advocacy and Mediation
Specialists are available Monday -
Friday, 8 am – 5:30 pm ET.

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Mail: Federal Communications
Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs
Bureau
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

What to Include in Your Informal Complaint

Your informal complaint should include the following:

- **your name, address, and the telephone number** or numbers involved with your complaint;
- **a telephone number where** you can be reached during the business day;
- **specific information** about your informal complaint that describes the dispute in detail, including the names of all companies involved;
- **names and telephone numbers of any company representatives** that you contacted, the dates you spoke with these representatives, and any other information that would help process your complaint;
- **a copy of any bill(s)** that relate to the complaint; and
- **the type of resolution** you are seeking, such as a credit or refund or a clearer explanation of the charge(s).

Other Informal Complaints

If your complaint involves slamming – the illegal practice of changing your preferred telephone company without your permission – you can file it electronically using Form 501 found at the FCC Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints_slamming.html. For more information about slamming visit www.fcc.gov/slamming.

If your complaint involves a radio or television broadcast that you consider obscene, profane, or indecent, you can file it electronically using Form 475B found at the FCC Web site at <http://svartifoss2.fcc.gov/cib/fcc475B.cfm>. For more information about broadcast indecency, obscenity, and profanity visit www.fcc.gov/eb/oip.

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Filing a Formal Complaint

If you are not satisfied with the response to your informal complaint you can file a formal complaint. Your formal complaint must be filed within six months of the date of the response to your informal complaint. The fee for filing a formal complaint is approximately \$180.00.

Formal complaint proceedings are similar to court proceedings because each party must comply with specific procedural rules, appear before the FCC, and file documents that address legal issues. Parties filing formal complaints usually are represented by lawyers or experts in telecommunications law and the FCC's procedural rules.

Complete information on how to file formal complaints can be found in sections 1.720 through 1.735 of the FCC's rules, located at 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.720 – 1.735. You can also visit the FCC's Enforcement Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/eb/tcd/laction.html.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an alternative format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject or related issues.

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